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Yajur Veda

The **Yajurveda** (a compound of yajus "sacrificial formula", + veda "knowledge") is the second of the four canonical texts of Hinduism, the Vedas. By some, it is estimated to have been composed between 1,400 and 1000 BCE, the Yajurveda 'Samhita', or 'compilation', contains the liturgy (mantras) needed to perform the sacrifices of the religion of the Vedic period, and the added Brahmana and Shrautasutra add information on the interpretation and on the details of their performance.

This Veda refers to the Ganga river and its region. It is the source of the Uttara Mimamsa school of thought and interpretation. The people had by then demarcated the forest areas from the cultivable areas around the villages and had taken to habitation in the villages. There is a prominent reason that prompted the separation of certain portions of the Veda into the Yajur Veda. The Yajur Veda has seven sections called Aranyakas or Forest Texts, indicating by that very name, that it refers more to disciplines and spiritual exercises which can be practised only in the seclusion and silence of the forest.

There are two primary versions or Samhitas of the Yajurveda: Shukla (white) and Krishna (black). Both contain the verses necessary for rituals, but the Krishna Yajurveda includes the Brahmana prose discussions within the Samhita, while the Shukla Yajurveda has separately a Brahmana text, the Shatapatha Brahmana.

Shukla Yajurveda

There are two (nearly identical) shakhas or recensions of the Shukla (White) Yajurveda, both known as Vajasaneyi-Samhita (VS):

- Vajasaneyi Madhyandiniya (VSM), originally of Bihar
- Vajasaneyi Kanva of originally of Kosala (VSK)

The former is popular in North India, Gujarat, parts of Maharashtra (north of Nashik) and thus commands a numerous following. The Kanva Shakha is popular in parts of Maharashtra (south of Nashik), Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Sureshvaracharya, one of the four main disciples of Jagadguru Adi Shankara, is said to have followed the Kanva shakha. The White Yajurveda has two Upanishads associated with it: the Isa Vasya and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the most voluminous of all Upanishads.

The VS has forty chapters or adhyayas, containing the formulae used with the following rituals:

- 1- 2 - New and Full Moon sacrifices
- 3 - Agnihotra
- 4- 8 - Somayajna
- 9- 10 - Vajapeya and Rajasuya, two modifications of the Soma sacrifice
- 11- 18 - Construction of altars and hearths, especially the Agnicayana
- 19- 21 - Sautramani, a ritual originally counteracting the effects of excessive Soma-drinking
- 22- 25 - Ashvamedha
- 26- 29 - Supplementary formulae for various rituals
- 30- 31 - Purushamedha
- 32- 34 - Sarvamedha
- 35 - Pitriyajna
- 36- 39 - Pravargya
- 40 - the final adhyaya is the famous Isavasya Upanishad

The VSM was edited and published by Weber (London and Berlin, 1852), and translated into English by Ralph T. H. Griffith (Benares, 1899).

Krishna Yajurveda

There are four recensions of the Krishna ("black") Yajurveda:

- Taittiriya sa?hita (TS) originally of Panchala
- Maitrayani sa?hita (MS) originally of the area south of Kurukshetra
- Charaka-Katha sa?hita (KS) originally of Madra and Kurukshetra
- Kapi??hala-Katha sa?hita (KapS) of the southern Punjab, Bahika

Each of the recensions has or had a Brahmana associated with it, and most of them also have associated Shrautasutras, Grhyasutras, Aranyakas, Upanishads and Pratishakhyas.

The Taittiriya Shakha: The best known and best preserved of these recensions is the TS, named after Tittiri, a pupil of Yaska. It consists of 7 books or kandas, subdivided in chapters or prapathakas, further subdivided into individual sections (anuvakas). Some individual hymns in this Samhita have gained particular importance in Hinduism; e.g. TS 4.5 and TS 4.7 constitute the Rudram Chamakam, while 1.8.6.i is the Shaivaite Tryambakam mantra. The beejas bhur bhuva? suva? prefixed to the (rigvedic) Savitur Gayatri mantra are also from the Yajurveda. The Taittiriya recension of the Black Yajurveda is the shakha now most prevalent in southern India. Among the followers of this Shakha, the Apastamba Sutras are the common.

The Taittiriya Shakha consists of Taittiriya Samhita (having seven kandas), Taittiriya Brahmana (having three kandas), Taittiriya Aranyaka (having seven prashnas) (See Aranyaka Literature), Taittiriya Upanishad (having three prashnas or vallis - Shiksha valli, Ananda valli and Bhrigu valli) and the Mahanarayana Upanishad. The Taittiriya Upanishad and Mahanarayana Upanishad are considered to be the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth prashnas of the Aranyaka. The words prapathaka and kanda (meaning sections) are interchangeably used in Vedic literature. Prashna and valli refer to sections of the Aranyaka.

There is another Short tract apart from the above and that is commonly known as Ekagni Kanda which mainly consists of mantrass used in the marriage and other rituals.

Three recensions have been edited and published: the Taittiriya by Albrecht Weber in "Indische Studien", XI, XII (Berlin, 1871-72), the Maitrayani by Leopold von Schroeder (Leipzig, 1881-86) and the Kathaka by von

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Schroeder (Leipzig, 1900-09). Translations of the Taittiriya Samhita into English were composed by A. B. Keith (Oxford 1913) and Devi Chand.

Legend

According to tradition, the vedic seer Yajnavalkya studied the Yajurveda collection under the tutelage of sage Vaishampayana maternal uncle of Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya's birth was with a purpose as purported by Gods. He was an Ekasandhigrahi, meaning he learnt anything with just once teaching. The two came to have serious differences in interpretation. On one occasion, Vaishampayana was so enraged that he demanded the return of all the knowledge he had imparted to Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya returned in indignation or (literally vomited) all the knowledge he had learnt. The other disciples of Vaishampayana, eager to receive this knowledge, assumed the form of tittiri birds and absorbed while being recited during the return (or ate the knowledge). Thus, that knowledge came to be called the Taittiriya Samhita (a derivation of tittiri). After having regurgitated the knowledge acquired from his teacher, Yajnavalkya worshipped Surya (the Sun God) and acquired new knowledge directly from Narayana who taught the Shukla Yajurveda taking the shape of a stallion (vaji-rupa).



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